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Brother of James Earl Ray Arrested as Burglary Suspect

FROM PRESS DISPATCHES

One of James Earl Ray's brothers, scheduled to testify in Washington this week before a House panel investigating the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has been jailed in St. Louis as a suspect in a burglary and assault.

The House assassinations subcommittee voted today to ask a St. Louis court to free John Larry Ray, 45, long enough for him to testify at the panel's final hearing Friday on the murder of King.

Police in St. Louis said John Larry Ray was arrested last night a short time after a man entered a south side home and scuffled with three men before fleeing.

Authorities said the man entered the home through an unlocked door and walked past two children into a bathroom. The children did not recognize the man, so they telephoned their father, Jesse Evans, 29. Evans went home with his brother, Thomas, 19, and a friend, John Lonsway.

Police said the man who had entered the home began fighting with Jesse Evans and started to choke him. Lonsway and Thomas Evans became involved, and the man fled when Lonsway got a shotgun.

Authorities were called and got a description of the man. A short time later Ray was arrested on the street and booked on suspicion of burglary and assault with intent to kill.

John Ray and another brother, Jerry Ray, were among several witnesses called to testify this week before the House committee looking into the assassination of King, for which James Earl Ray has pleaded guilty and is serving a prison sentence.

The committee's chief counsel, G. Robert Blakey, said in a prepared statement issued in Washington yesterday that the committee has uncovered evidence pointing to the possibility of a "Ray family conspiracy" to murder King. He said the committee's principal suspicions fell most heavily on James Earl Ray's two brothers.

The subcommittee's vote today to ask St. Louis to free John Ray for the trip to Washington interrupted the full committee's hearing at which former Attorney General Ramsey Clark was testifying. Chief committee counsel G. Robert Blakey said Clark's conduct in the aftermath of the Memphis shooting must be carefully examined.

Clark told the panel that he regrets saying publicly soon after King's murder April 4, 1968, that the evidence pointed to a single assassin. Clark said that remark led to later charges of a government cover-up.

Clark was attorney general when King died. When he made his remark about the single assassin, no suspect was in custody.

"Why did you comment at so early a stage?" he was asked.

"My observerations were quite different at the time," Clark said. He said he based his view on evidence available and the public's right to know.

"The public was desperately concerned about the death of King," he said. But, he added, "Hindsight has now changed my view."

Except for a trip to London by Fred Vinson, head of the criminal division, to oversee the extradition of James Earl Ray as King's assassin, Blakey said, the "role of the Justice Department was most conspicuous for its absence."